



The AT Messenger

....bringing technology to you

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DATI Conference is a Blockbuster!!

Question: What do you get when you combine over 350 AT aficionados, 24 exhibits of AT products and services, 9 cutting-edge presentations, and an impressive keynote speaker?

Answer: A conference to remember—in this case the DATI Annual Conference.

This year's event, held on Thursday, September 28 at Clayton Hall in Newark, stands out as perhaps DATI's best conference ever. As Beth Mineo, DATI Director, noted in her opening remarks, the event provided tangible evidence of the DATI's impact on the state since it began four years ago. For example, the great majority of the presenters hailed from Delaware; in years past, a great deal of the talent had to be "imported" from other states. Further, this year's exhibition was loaded with AT service providers, reflecting the incredible growth in this sector in the past few years.

The conference was indeed fortunate to have Carol Cohen kick off the day's line-up with her insider's view of the AT-related scene in Washington and throughout the nation. At the same time that she recounted some of the disturbing cuts to programs, she also reminded attendees of the power that constituents wield simply by speaking out. Carol presented some impressive statistics about the impact of the nationwide network of Tech Act projects like the DATI, noting that hundreds of thousands of lives have been touched by the awareness, training, and technology access components of these projects.

Each of the conference's breakout sessions contributed to the "systems change" focus that Ms. Cohen stressed in her keynote address. She stressed that consumers and service providers

alike must arm themselves with knowledge about state-of-the art AT and its applications, and also with confidence in their abilities to advocate for more consumer-responsive laws, regulations, policies, and practices. Conference evaluations indicated that attendees were exceedingly pleased with the scope and quality of the conference sessions, and that they intend to use the information they gained. The exhibits garnered high marks from attendees as well as exhibitors for being well-organized and conducive to learning and networking.

Topics suggested for next year's conference included more on augmentative communication, environmental control, home modifications, and computer access. Attendees also want to learn more about funding and establishing collaborative relationships. We'll do our best to deliver these topics and more at next year's conference.

What's Inside...

DATI Conference	1
Home Sweet Home	2
A New Look for the Sussex ATRC	3
Consumers Helping Consumers	4
RESNA Receives a Four-Year Technical Assistance Grant	4
American Association of People With Disabilities	5
Financing Assistive Technology	6
Delaware Recycles AT	8
DATI Publications Order Form	9
DATI Mailing List Application	11

HOME SWEET HOME...AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

*Patty Hove, Chief Occupational Therapist,
DATI Kent and Sussex County ATRCs*



Whether it is a piece of velcro or a computerized environmental control unit, assistive technology in the home is changing the lives of people with disabilities, empowering them to be as self-sufficient, productive and safe as possible.

What accommodations can be made for people with physical impairments? People with physical impairments include those who have limited or no use of their arms, legs, and hands, incoordination, or loss of sensation. For people who use wheelchairs, the installation of ramps and automatic doors is often necessary to provide a pathway to the outside world. Without expensive remodeling, specially designed door hinges may allow two or more inches in doorways.

Accessible work surfaces, electric or battery operated appliances, and environmental control units (ECUs) in the kitchen allow people to be independent in their home. While some modifications are costly, others are quite inexpensive. Consider the individual with poor strength or limited dexterity who uses a cup hook under the counter to open soda cans. By hooking the tab of a can on the cup holder and carefully pulling it away, the individual is able to open the can. Equipment such as a small cart on wheels or an anti-tip tray allows an individual to plan, prepare and safely transport food and equipment within the kitchen or from one room to another.

Through the use of computers and/or environmental control units, people with little or no use of their body parts can operate hundreds of appliances, allowing them to control their hospital bed, turn their heating/air-conditioning units on and off, and operate their lights and television. Consider the individual who moves his eyebrow to operate his computer or to answer the phone. This indi-

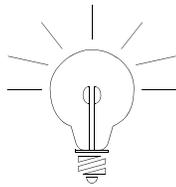
vidual also uses the wheels on his powered wheelchair to “run over” a switch that turns on his appliances. He was able to be alone for two to four hours, giving him independence as well as affording respite for his family.

What accommodations can be made for people with visual impairments? Many people with low vision can be accommodated by enlarging the numbers on a telephone, or by using any number of audible cues where they’re needed: wind chimes to warn where the steps are, a buzzer to let one know when the front door or a cupboard door is ajar. Strategically placed furniture can help in crossing a large, seemingly vast living room. Contrasting tape on stairs turns a “blur” into well-defined areas of dark and light. When managing household finances, custom-made templates or signature guides enable the individual to sign his check or write a letter.

For a person who is blind, a talking watch and talking alarm clock can be invaluable for time management, and a talking calculator can help in balancing the checkbook. On stove and oven knobs, key points can be marked with raised material such as glue, Hi Marks, or nail polish. Small holes can be drilled and filled with small pegs so one can feel the temperature settings.

What accommodations can be made for a person with a hearing impairment? People with hearing impairments include those with mild to profound hearing loss and deafness. Accommodations include amplified telephones with adjustable volume controls, the TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf), and visual alerting devices such as strobe lights on fire alarms, telephones, and doorbells. A vibrating pager can alert a mother to her infant’s cry. Some systems have

different types of vibrations to differentiate what is being activated. For example, a strong vibration may be emitted for an alarm and a more subtle vibration may signal a person entering the room. A “bed shaker” alerts someone who is deaf to either the fire alarm or an alarm clock. All new televisions now come equipped with close captioning capabilities. An audio link may be used to amplify the volume on the television without disturbing other viewers or neighbors.



Technology in the home is important to the safety of individuals with disabilities. In many cases the technology allows an individual to be more independent, relying less on other family members. The costs of the technology mentioned can range from one dollar to several hundred dollars. For further information on specific devices, please contact the ATRC in your county. Each center houses a wide variety of equipment that can be borrowed by consumers, therapists, or businesses. The centers also contain information on where to purchase assistive technology and how to obtain funding and training.

A New Look for the Sussex ATRC

“New faces, new places”—this is what you’ll find when you visit the DATI Assistive Technology Resource Center in Sussex County. The ATRC has moved from the Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center in Georgetown to a suite of offices in the West Building at DelTech in Georgetown. The new location also houses a new team of professionals to assist you. Actually, the new administrative structure combines some veteran DATI staff and some newcomers. The Kent and Sussex ATRCs have merged under the direction of Maureen Schweitzer. Maureen, Ed Salisbury, and the other terrific Kent ATRC staff will work closely with Don Erhart, the new Assistive Technology Specialist and Carolyn Keene, the new secretary, to bring a comprehensive program of AT access, information-and-referral, and training to Sussex County. The Kent/Sussex “Dream Team” has a wonderful line-up of trainings scheduled for the coming months; consult the calendar insert for the details. They also look forward to welcoming everyone at their Open House, scheduled for January 12 from noon to 7 p.m.

While some things change, others stay the same. You can still access the Sussex County ATRC by calling (302) 856-7946 (Voice) or (302)856-6714 (Voice or TDD).

Consumers Helping Consumers

Over many years, our society has grown to appreciate the support and encouragement which can be provided by people who share a common bond regarding an issue, problem or situation. DATI is capitalizing on this valuable resource with its AT Peer Mentor Service, a project bringing experienced assistive technology (AT) users together with more inexperienced users. These volunteers are familiar with devices for deaf people, computer access for people with visual impairments, augmentative communication devices, mobility aids, aids for activities of daily living, and adapted driving. The AT Peer Mentor Service and is available free of charge to any AT user.

This service is not meant to replace AT professional services or other resources; rather, it is intended to provide grass roots support from people who have already been there.

In August, the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) sponsored a day-and-a-half seminar to train volunteers to support novice assistive technology (AT) users. Anyone interested in talking with a trained Peer Mentor is encouraged to call one of DATI's Assistive Technology Resource Centers or the DATI Central Site. Some general information will be taken from you in order to match you up with an appropriate Peer Mentor, and then arrangements will be made to put the two of you in touch. Phone numbers to call are:

- Central Site—(302)651-6790 (Voice)
(302)651-6794 (TDD)
- New Castle County—(302)657-5647 (Voice)
(302)657-5893 (TDD)
- Kent County—(302)739-6885 (Voice)
(302)739-6886 (TDD)
- Sussex County—(302)856-7946 (Voice)
(302)856-6714 (TDD)

RESNA Receives a Four-Year Technical Assistance Grant

RESNA is pleased to announce its continuation of the Technical Assistance Project. Funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, U.S. Department of Education, under the *Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act Amendments of 1994 (P.L. 103-218)*, the grant will run from October 1, 1995 through September 30, 1999.

The RESNA Technical Assistance Project has carried out its role as technical assistance provider to states and territories for the past six years by providing on-site consultations, conducting national and regional meetings and teleconferences, developing resource materials, disseminating information, and providing assistance via the telephone. Under the new grant, RESNA will continue to conduct these activities as well as initiate new activities such as:

- establishing specialized workgroups on assistive technology (SWATs) in areas such as special education, vocational rehabilitation, medical assistance, and private insurance to identify barriers to assistive technology acquisition and develop action plans to reduce or eliminate the barriers;
- working closely with the RESNA Quality Assurance Project to improve consumer satisfaction and help ensure consumer safety regarding assistive technology;
- expanding the clearinghouse of information about states' assistive technology activities as well as maintaining a presence on the Internet's World Wide Web; and
- collaborating with the National Center for the Improvement of Practice at the Education Development Center in Boston to establish an electronic forum for state Tech Act project personnel to network with educators on various issues.

RESNA is a non-profit interdisciplinary association for the advancement of rehabilitation and assistive technologies. Its purpose is to increase the independence of individuals with disabilities through the use of assistive technology devices and rehabilitation services.

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

AAPD is a new organization putting people with disabilities first. It will service as a vehicle to allow people with disabilities to unify, organize and coordinate efforts in the private sector without government programs or benefits.

The group is the brainchild of five disability rights advocates: Justin Dart, former head of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; Sylvia Walker, director of Howard University Research and Training Center; Paul Hearne, president of The Dole Foundation; John Kemp, executive director of United Cerebral Palsy Associations; and I. King Jordan, president of Gallaudet University.

AAPD will be working to make people independent and depend less on government support. Government and private payments to support people with disabilities of employable age who do

not have jobs is estimated to be \$232 billion annually, according to AAPD. Another \$195 billion in earnings and taxes are lost each year because Americans with disabilities are unemployed.

AAPD will seek to:

- Foster leadership among people with disabilities.
- Provide information to and from the disability community.
- Educate the public and government policy-makers regarding issues affecting people with disabilities.
- Further the productivity, independence, full citizenship and total integration of people with disabilities into all aspects of society and the natural environments.
- And promote service availability in the areas of medical equipment and mobility aids, personal assistance services, insurance and other benefits of membership.

Membership Application

Name _____

Check Preferred Mailing address:

Home Address _____

Work Address _____

Home Phone _____

Work Phone _____ TTY

Home Fax _____

Work Fax _____

Home EMail _____

Work EMail _____

Would you like information in an alternate format? If so, which format? _____

Please process my membership application.

Signature and Date _____

Thank your for your interest and pedge of support.

- Your membership dues are \$5.00/person. Members in 1995 will be Charter Members, and the membership will run through 1996.
- Mail this application and your check to: AAPD, 4401-A Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 223, Washington, DC 20008.

What is your disability? (optional) _____ Check all in which you have an interest:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility Aids | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports & Leisure | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Rights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Devices | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Life & Parenting | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible Travel & Tours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Fashions | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Assistive Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Diet & Health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers | | <input type="checkbox"/> Homemaking & Independent Living | <input type="checkbox"/> Arts & Entertainment |

FINANCING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

When Not To Take No for an Answer

Ron Sibert, DATI Funding Specialist

For people with disabilities, public and private medical insurance is still the most frequently used means of obtaining assistive technology devices and services. Unfortunately, however, claims for equipment are not always approved the first time around. Then, just as unfortunately, many people with legitimate equipment needs simply give up after being notified of denial. In many such instances, the decision could be reversed on appeal. In fact, a vast majority—more than 85%—of appeals are eventually settled or decided in the claimant's favor. This suggests that many more people could achieve positive outcomes if they simply tried a little harder. Recall that history is full of cases in which the actions of a single individual have changed whole systems, governments, societies...even the world. Why not one's own circumstances? Why do we so often observe people simply giving up after the first attempt?

I once heard that many people's first thought when considering how to respond to a challenge is to look at the odds *against* a favorable outcome. They actually begin by looking at how many ways their efforts could *fail*, and proceed to talk themselves out of trying. Sound familiar? Even though most of us may perceive this way of thinking to be a bit backward, it's still very easy to take a negative perspective—particularly when there is “additional work” to do. This article speaks to you persistent souls out there who dare to think otherwise and are willing to push a bit harder to make things happen.

Because the field of technology is vast and ever-changing, misconception and lack of awareness remain among the most formidable barriers to assistive technology access and funding. Of course, the additional work required here is to obtain and then share (or creatively apply) the missing information where it's needed. For

instance, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers to make “reasonable accommodations” for their employees in ways that would not create an “undue hardship” for their firms. However, many employers have misconceptions about the law, their own rights and privileges, and those of their employees with disabilities. For example, many assume that work-site accommodations are too expensive and are therefore unreasonable. In fact, most accommodations can be purchased or fabricated for under \$300. Also, according to the June 1995 *Report on Disability Programs*, there are three tax credits designed to help defray costs of providing accommodations. They are:

- The Disabled Access Tax Credit
- Targeted Jobs Tax Credit
- Tax Deduction to Remove Architectural & Transportation Barriers to People with Disabilities and Elderly Individuals

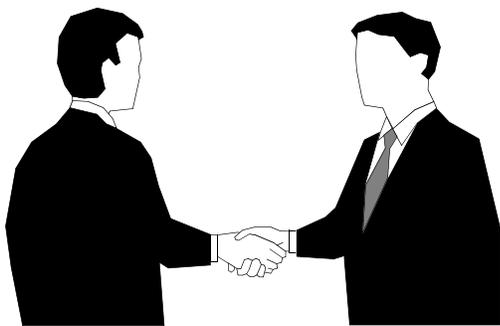
Detailed information about these tax credits is available from the Internal Revenue Service at (800) 829-3676. Seeking and bringing such information to a prospective or current employer could go a long way toward not only gaining access to equipment, but also fostering that all important trusting employer/employee relationship.

Medicare or Medicaid appeals and court decisions are also useful advocacy tools. Certain precedent-setting augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device decisions are good examples. In August 1993, a Medicare administrative law judge (ALJ) ruled that the definition of prosthetics includes AAC devices, and approved funding for a special type: one composed of a computer and software. The ALJ based that decision on the Medicare Carrier's Manual, paragraph 2130 which says that devices that “replace all or part of the function of the permanently inop-

erative or malfunctioning body organ are covered when furnished on a physician's order." Prior to this decision, Medicare had not routinely covered AAC devices. In fact, it is still not commonly covered, and Medicare does not treat ALJ decisions as legal precedents. However, the decision itself is likely to provide a powerful argument for anyone pursuing a similar appeal.

Just recently, a U.S. District Court in Mississippi decided in favor of three youths for whom AAC devices had been prescribed, but coverage was denied by Medicaid. Although the original device recommendations had been based on clinical assessments performed by qualified speech-language pathologists, the Medicaid physician/medical reviewer denied them as not medically necessary—basically because he did not believe the claimants really needed to communicate. The court blasted the Medicaid administrators, ruling that the doctor's assessments were subjective (i.e., not clinically valid) and not adequate for making such decisions. Thus, Mississippi's Medicaid division was ordered to provide the recommended devices.

Note that not one of these decisions would have seen the light of day if the recipients of those devices or their representatives had quit after their claims were rejected.



Be aware of your insurers' appeal process/requirements, stay generally informed, and don't be afraid to apply what you've learned!

New Grant Benefits Students Statewide

The Applied Science and Engineering Labs has been awarded a \$223,000 grant from the Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to improve access to all types of educational opportunities for students with disabilities in each district in the state.

This project will bring to life a concept developed through the efforts of the Delaware Department of Public Instruction, the DATI, and several individuals representing school districts, institutions of higher education, and private AT service providers in Delaware.

The project works to increase educational opportunities through AT access in three ways simultaneously. First, families will be able to learn about ways that AT can impact educational progress through a series of open houses to be held at the DATI Assistive Technology Resource Centers in January, and via information-sharing mechanisms such as the World Wide Web and a fax-back system. Second, the feasibility of universal access to the Internet and the World Wide Web will be demonstrated in six school-based sites throughout the state. Third, the grant will support an intensive 16-month training series for designees from each district who will then serve as AT "point people" for their colleagues within their home districts. The series will cover all types of AT applications in day-long workshops, and will include several sessions pertaining to the use of the Internet and other telecommunications options. In fact, some sessions will be delivered electronically, and will use the Internet to encourage cooperative learning experiences among trainees in different areas of the state. The grant will supply each district designee with the necessary hardware and software for full Internet access and team collaboration via electronic mail.

Marcos Salganicoff and Beth Mineo will be co-directors of the new project. Dr. Salganicoff will oversee the design and deployment of the network and other information-exchange mechanisms, and Dr. Mineo will coordinate training activities and the involvement of the DATI sites.



If you'd like more information, or have equipment or an equipment need, call the DATI office at (302) 651-6790 or 651-6794 TDD.

Devices Available:

Bath Chair-Good Condition-Free!
Bathtub Bench, Good Condition, \$100
Bathtub Transfer Bench, \$120
Bean Pillow with liner & cover, \$55
Bedside Commode (2), \$55 each
B.O.S.S. 8000-Casio Organizer, \$130
Braun Wheelchair Lift for minivan-\$300
Child Bath Support Seat (2), \$190 each
Child's Electric Wheelchair (2)-Free!
Commode Chairs-Good condition-Free!
DeVilbiss Pulma-aid Nebulizer, Good Condition, Free!
Electric Chair Lift, 2 years old-\$1,000
Geriatric Chair-Brand New, \$600
Geriatric Chair, mobile-Good condition-\$150
High Back Toilet Support/Child, \$225
Invacare Patient Hydraulic Lift-Good Condition, \$500
Lawall Prosthetic Leg Brace for the left leg, Free!
Leg Braces-(2) for left leg, needs minor repair, Free!
Lumex Raised Toilet Seat, slight tear-Free!
Lumex Shower Bench, slight tear-Free!
Manual Roff Invacare Wheelchair, Good Condition-\$300
Outdoor stair lift-Free!
Pediatric Wheelchair-Free!
Portable Shampoo Tray, \$30
Portable & Hand-held Shower Hose, \$5
Quad Shower/Commode Chair, \$1,050
Raised Toilet Seat w/rails, \$60

Raised Toilet Seat, adjustable, \$35
Scan Man w/catchword PRO OCR for windows, \$280
Scanning Lightwriter, \$1,400
Shampoo Rinse Tray, \$30
Shower Chair with Toilet Pail and Foot rests, \$200
Sonic Alert Baby Cry Signaler, \$30
Style Craft Recliner Chair with power standing assist, Good Condition-\$500
Telecaption Caption Decode, \$115
Three-wheeled Scooter-child's, Good condition, Free!
Trunk Lift for Rascal brand three-wheeled scooter, Good Condition, \$20
Tubby II Chair, \$190
Unmouse, \$80
Upper Body Brace, Like New, Free!
Voice dialer telephone, 5 years old, price negotiable
Walkers-Good Condition-Free!
Walker-Works Fine-\$20
Windsor Feeding Machine-Good condition, \$700 or best offer

Devices Needed:

Personal Computers
Easy Lift Chairs
Stair Glides
TDDs
Three-wheeled Powered Scooters
Video Cassette Recorder
Wheelchairs (manual & electric)
Wheelchair Ramp (portable)

Updates...

The **World Institute on Disability (WID)** has announced that Sue Suter will be interim president. Suter, who is post polio, has been a member of WID's board of directors since 1993. Suter will fill the post left vacant by Ed Roberts, who died of heart failure March 14. Suter is the director of the Springfield, Ill., office of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and president of Suter and Co., which provides consultation and technical assistance regarding the ADA and issues related to people with disabilities. WID, founded in 1983, is a public policy, research and training center which focuses on issues affecting the quality of life for people with disabilities worldwide.

Recording for the Blind has officially changed its name to **Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic**. The name change is to alert students with dyslexia that the organization's recorded textbooks can enhance their educational success. Contact: Ellen Ogdin, (609) 520-8095, voice; (609) 520-7990, fax.